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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses moral, logistical, and other issues concerning phases of "Operation Babylift," the transportation of approximately 2,000 Vietnamese children to the United States for adoption by U.S. citizens at the end of the Vietnamese War. Inadequate health screening, improper selection methods, and crowded and unsafe aircraft are cited as major problems with the airlift of the children. It is noted that many observers have viewed the airlift as a political ploy and/or a tokenistic effort to divert attention from the greater problem of all displaced Vietnamese. The airlift is also criticized for portraying American disrespect for Vietnamese culture and for catering to Americans who had previously been unable to adopt children. A comprehensive plan for providing Vietnamese children with social services is presented. Specific recommendations include: (1) separation of humanitarian aid to the Vietnamese from all other aspects of U.S. Vietnamese policy, (2) an extensive mobilization of Federal bureaucracy to meet Vietnamese needs, (3) the designation of an individual and a federal agency other than AID to take charge of such a mobilization, and (4) provision of assistance to the 2,000 Vietnamese children brought here during Operation Babylift as well as to the many more children remaining in Vietnam. (ED)

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The Vietnamese Children's Airlift: Too Little and Too Late

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I have had both a personal and professional concern with the controversy that has arisen over the recent "baby lift" to this country of Vietnamese children. (Although this was called Operation Babylift, many of the children flown here were several years beyond babyhood.) Like so many other Americans, I kept abreast of this situation as it unfolded in the many stories and articles that appeared in our newspapers and magazines. I was prompted to write this paper by two headline questions which I encountered in the responsible news media. The New York Times headlined a report of the Vietnamese children's story with the question, "Who will say what is best for the orphans?" In a later story Time magazine presented coverage of the airlift under the title, "The orphans: Saved or lost?" Both headlines reflect the ambivalence that our nation feels concerning this latest episode growing out of America's difficult and continuing involvement in Southeast Asia.

The children of Vietnam are of course the most innocent victims of a war which, from the time perspective of the child, must appear to be literally endless. The emotional clamor surrounding the airlift seemed to obscure if not delay the need to take constructive, coordinated steps to help all of the children of Vietnam. It became apparent that we could not agree upon what was best for the children without an initial analytic effort to disentangle and evaluate the many issues raised by the practice of bringing Vietnamese children to America for adoption. I have attempted such an effort here.

Since an analysis of a complex issue must invariably be colored by the analyst's values, attitudes, and areas of particular expertise, I feel that I

should put my credentials and limitations on display at the outset. For the past 20 years, I have studied the development of children and have had a special concern with those children who have been subjected to deprivation early in their lives. Since the Vietnamese children issue has become more than a little politicized, it is also appropriate that I disclose my political predilections. I consider myself an apolitical individual who for many years has been dedicated solely to doing all that I could to guarantee children everywhere the best lives possible. In this regard it might be worth mentioning that I was nominated by a Republican President to become Chief of the U.S. Children's Bureau and our nation's first Director of the Office of Child Development. This nomination was confirmed by a Senate which had an overwhelming Democratic majority. The foregoing hopefully should make clear that I prefer to be taken more seriously when discussing children's development than when discussing foreign policy or political matters, areas in which I have no particular expertise.

Children's Airlift Represents What's Best and Worst in America

My initial reaction to the airlift of Vietnamese children was that it represented what is best and worst in our nation's ethos. On the positive side, one can experience only pride when witnessing our nation's characteristic sympathy for the downtrodden and generosity to those less fortunate than ourselves, phenomena which were expressed in an outpouring of volunteer labor and offers of assistance. After a decade of observing a fractionated and adversarial American society of the old against the young, lay people against professionals, the black against the white, the poor against the rich, and the citizenry against its leaders, it was particularly refreshing to see what our nation could achieve if it would but put aside smoldering animosities

and unite in a common cause. The sheer logistical job of, in a matter of a few days, uniting hundreds of children with adoptive parents throughout the nation was indeed an overwhelming task to accomplish.

The common desire to help certainly made for some strange alliances. Playboy celebrity Hugh Hefner and Cardinal Cooke, Archbishop of New York, both were at La Guardia Airport on the same day helping in the task of getting Vietnamese orphans to their new adoptive parents. Those who view business leaders as motivated solely by the profit motive would certainly have to reexamine their attitudes in light of the business community's reaction to the dire needs of the Vietnamese children. A Connecticut businessman, Robert Macauley, put up a quarter of a million dollars to fly 325 Vietnamese orphans to the United States. The Safeway food chain provided a wide array of supplies to several hundred Vietnamese children who had to remain in the Denver area before joining their adoptive parents.

It was also gratifying during this period to see a common concern of the average citizen become an important agenda item for our leaders in both the executive and legislative branches of our federal government. For example, a bipartisan group of 87 members of the House of Representatives urged President Ford to propose humanitarian aid for South Vietnamese orphans. In the Senate, Hubert Humphrey and Edward Kennedy announced that they would work for massive humanitarian aid to refugees in both South Vietnam and the Communist-held areas. And in speeches in Las Vegas and Washington, President Ford stated that he would work to provide humanitarian aid for Vietnam.

Unfortunately, our nation's less favorable side was also exposed by the children's airlift. Again we saw America forced to react immediately to almost overwhelming events rather than to be in control of events by

carefully thinking through a sound plan of how to deal with the various contingencies of the refugee situation in Vietnam. The problems of refugees and orphaned children are not problems of recent vintage but have existed for at least 10 years. Why was this lead time for careful analysis and planning lost, forcing our nation to behave in a precipitous manner which made us vulnerable to charges of racism, elitism, chauvinism, and disregard for the best interests of Vietnamese children and their families? The airlift episode represents one more instance in which our nation adopted a tokenistic and simplistic solution to a complex problem. With all of our rhetoric about the United States being a child-oriented society, the fact of the matter is that we have a pretty poor record in helping needy children of any nationality, including our own. (Was it only 10 years ago that many Americans thought that a 6-week Head Start session would compensate for several years of deprivation and would inoculate our most needy children against the effects of many future years of economic and social deprivation?) Furthermore, as I read through the grey and turgid prose of countless memoranda issued by federal officials in regard to the social services needs of the Vietnamese, it became apparent to me that while these officials were dedicated, they were part of a bureaucracy that had become too cumbersome and ponderous to be able to proceed with a task quickly, decisively, and well.

Individual, Professional, and Organizational Reactions

Public attitude is an important factor in the construction of our social policies. To the extent that there is a groundswell of opinion in favor of one course of action rather than another, the more likely it is that this course of action will be pursued by our nation's decision makers. The changing attitudes of Americans towards Operation Babylift represent an

interesting case history in which an initially positive reaction changed within a few days to a negative attitude. The conflict between pro and con opinions towards the airlift can be seen most clearly in the April 28, 1975 issue of Newsweek, where one of the magazine's columnists presented a positive view while another columnist presented a negative view. The positive attitudes often boiled down to the simple issue of saving the lives of innocent children. Thus Phyllis Biddle, an adoptive parent, said:

> High ideals about extended families and psychological theories do not save children's lives but action does. Let us praise the people who have transcended the criticism and labored to give these children life which in the ultimate confusion of changing regimes might have been denied them. (New Haven Register, 4/29/75)

The negative attitudes are well summarized in a statement by Joseph Reid, Executive Director of the Child Welfare League of America, who said:

> Vietnamese, like all people, do not want to lose their children. All Vietnamese have a strong sense of family obligation, and they have shown themselves willing and capable of caring for their own children. Our great moral responsibility is to enable them, in their time of great tragedy, to do so. . . . Wouldn't it be far better for the children of Vietnam to be cared for in their own highly civilized culture--whether Communist or non-Communist--than to destroy that culture further by exporting tens of thousands of them to alien homes? Hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese men, women and children have died during decades of war. Do we further deplete their population by "rescuing" their children through flight to the United States? (Quoted in the Denver Post, 4/9/75)

This latter point was made more strongly by Judith Coburn who reported, "Some antiwar Vietnamese legislators believe that the Babylift is an effort by the U.S. to strip their country of future generations" (Village Voice, 4/14/75).

The one group of Americans that has remained unswervingly positive about the airlift has been the adoptive parents who are providing homes for the children. In both word and deed these parents have continued to make a touching and eloquent case in favor of the practice of bringing Vietnamese children to America for adoption. In a letter to the New York Times, Faye Caperna and Susan Wildermuth stated:

> As adoptive mothers of thirteen children, . . . we are deeply disturbed by much of the misinformed and emotional counter-reaction to the airlift of Vietnamese orphans. . . . Children born of any nationality or any race have an absolute right to life and the security of parents who love them. . . . Ideally, political, social and economic conditions would be such that all parents would be able to raise the children born to them, or orphaned children be returned to the race and culture of their birth for adoption. . . . Last Sunday, as volunteers, we carried frightened and malnourished Vietnamese children off an airplane to the arms of loving parents. . . . "Save the children" is a plea that must transcend national and racial alliances. (4/14/75)

I can speak from personal experience concerning the positive views of those Americans who have adopted Vietnamese children. A statement in which I called into question the wisdom of bringing Vietnamese children to America for adoption was quoted in the New York Times. Shortly thereafter I

received a smattering of letters from adoptive parents, all of whom employed very forceful language in calling my views into question. I received no letters in support of my negative stance towards Operation Babylift.

In view of the Catholic affiliation of certain of the charitable organizations operating in Vietnam and arranging trans-national adoption, an unexpected critic of Operation Babylift was the Rt. Rev. Msgr. Charles Grange--an official of the coordinating agency for Catholic social services, Caritas. Msgr. Grange told a news conference that Caritas instructed all of its regional branches and all Catholic organizations to stay out of the airlift program. (Some Catholic churchmen have noted that the Caritas statement does not represent the Church's official position, and they placed themselves on record as continuing to support the airlift operation.) Msgr. Grange stated that the mass expatriation of orphans from South Vietnam was a deplorable and unjustified mistake originated by an unmotivated hysteria. He pointed out that adoption is contrary to the cultural traditions of the Vietnamese people--orphans are generally placed in the custody of relatives or taken care of by the community, and adoption by strangers has seldom been considered in the past. This fact serves to strengthen the position of another religious group opposed to the airlift, the Clergy and Laity Concerned, who have argued that American aid money should be spent on programs for children <u>in</u> Vietnam.

In a fine series of articles in the <u>New York Times</u>, Richard Flaste reported that the most impassioned opposition to the airlift has come from a number of Vietnamese residing in America. Tran Tuong Nhu, a Vietnamese anthropologist living in California, was "livid" about the airlift. She was quoted as saying, "What is this terror Americans feel that my people

will devour children? . . . There are 22,000 day-care centers in the North. They love children and take care of them." The Union of Vietnamese in America, also voicing disapproval of the "kidnapping" of Vietnamese children via the airlift, was reported as asking, "Isn't a better way to Save the Babies to end the war?" To the Vietnamese the babylift represented mortgaging the future of their nation. Such feelings are consistent with the findings of Dr. Shirley Jenkins, a professor of social research at Columbia, whose research (ongoing) has shown that there is considerable resentment among ethnic groups when people try to help by adopting children in a time of difficulty.

Errors in the Planning, Procedures, and Logistics of Operation Babylift

One must ask why an effort begun with such enthusiasm and initially receiving the support of so many Americans degenerated into a national controversy and ultimately resulted in such negativism. For one thing, the orphan airlift got off to a horrendously bad start when the first plane used to transport the children (a C-5A) crashed shortly after takeoff--a crash which claimed the lives of some 150 children and 50 adults aboard. With the wisdom of hindsight, we must ask why this particular plane was used in the airlift. The C-5A is a giant cargo transport which was not designed for passengers and certainly not suitable for transporting infants. Some of the children were placed 10 abreast in seats that normally hold three persons, and others were strapped down to the floor in the plane's lower cargo deck. Standard safety concerns appear to have been held in abeyance, as there were not even enough oxygen masks for everyone on the plane. Furthermore, many feel that the C-5A has never worked well. For instance, Senator William

Proxmire has long been concerned about design flaws which have caused engine supports and wings to crack and drop off in test flights, and he has urged the government to consider canceling its contract with the builder. At this writing Senator Proxmire plans an investigation to determine why the Pentagon decided to use the C-5A in the airlift.

The situation precipitated by the airplane crash was exacerbated by news of the flight to this country of a plane commanded by Edward Daly, President of World Airways. In an unauthorized flight, Daly loaded a plane with 58 orphans and defied officials to stop him. When told his plane was not properly equipped to carry infants and sick children, his answer as quoted in The New Republic was: "How are they going to stop the plane, shoot it down?" He managed to make the trip safely and upon landing was met by the cheers of a crowd. It appears that Americans today have little difficulty in identifying with an individual who decries and cuts through the bureaucratic red tape that seems to hamper us at our every turn. However I am afraid that we have here again a picture of good intentions and poor procedures. While Daly's behavior might make for a great John Wayne movie, it was hardly a course of action that would meet the approval of anyone concerned with the safety and well-being of the children he transported. Furthermore, these innocent children arrived in the U.S. as illegal immigrants. Steps are currently being taken to penalize Mr. Daly for his violation of U.S. immigration laws.

Another problem of major concern during the airlift was the inadequate health screening of the Vietnamese children in Saigon and the impromptu and inadequate health services delivered to the children while in transit or when they arrived in the United States. Under the direction of Dr. Alex

Stalcup, many west coast pediatricians magnanimously gave of their time in treating these new arrivals to our country. While one can applaud these selfless efforts, what we witnessed was an unplanned ordeal in which tired and overworked individuals tried to do whatever they could with the limited resources at their command. An example of the situation which confronted these medical personnel may be seen in a report of one arriving flight carrying 313 youngsters. Dr. Stalcup and his team found many of these children suffering from severe cases of dehydration, pneumonia, diarrhea, chicken pox, and other viral diseases. (It was reported that by the end of the 16-hour leg of the flight from Japan, the caretakers were running out of liquids with which to treat the dehydration cases.) Forty-seven of the children were sent immediately to hospitals, and in a special report to the New York Times we read that a number of these children were unquestionably near death. Other flights had similar incidences of illness and cases requiring hospitalization.

Whatever physical danger confronted these children while in Vietnam, the haste and unpreparedness of the airlift could only subject them to further danger. The health problems of many of the arriving children suggest to me that they were too ill to be subjected to such a long trip and should not have been put on the planes bound for the U.S. Many of the children who survived the C-5A crash, for example, were not given the time to recover either physically or psychologically from the experience of the crash. Instead they appear to have been hurriedly bandaged and placed aboard airplanes the very next day. Dr. Stalcup said that many of these children arrived suffering from head and other injuries, some had injuries that became infected in route, and many children became ill while in transit. Besides the health hazards, the transportation of such ill children could also subject

them to psychological trauma. Imagine the fear that these children felt wh placed aboard a plane so soon after their horrendous experience.

The only encouraging medical report during the early period of the airlift was Dr. Stalcup's statement that "There have been no rare or bizzar or tropical diseases among the orphans. What we have found is the garden variety of illnesses, nothing different from what you'd find in the family pediatrician's office." A task force of the American Academy of Pediatrics issued a report on the health of the Vietnamese orphans which was consonant with Dr. Stalcup's early observations. The task force, chaired by Dr. Henry Seidel, reported that the Vietnamese children brought here suffered from many of the same illnesses afflicting American children, with undernourishment making the Vietnamese children's cases more frequent and more severe. This group also assumed the responsibility of determining whether the Vietnamese children were bringing to this country diseases which might endanger American children. Their survey disclosed no disease which would require quarantine and none which was unique or unusual. Although the basic thrust of the task force report was that the Vietnamese children represented no great danger, some points of caution were raised. A few cases of meningitis were found, but of the type which can be treated successfully. Dr. Seidel also cautioned that some of the children have hepatitis and that their adoptive parents need to exercise care to be sure the disease is not spread. The American Academy of Pediatrics task force took no position on whether the children should have been brought here in the first place. In response to this issue Dr. Seidel said, "The question is irrelevant in terms of the 1,900 already here. Our concern is simply that they should get the best car

The health problems of these children predate the airlift and we should have been making an effort to improve the health of Vietnamese children whil

they were still in Vietnam. Referring to one flight of over 300 children, Dr. Stalcup stated, "By American standards about half of them should be in the hospital right now. . . . By Vietnamese standards, these were the cream of the crop, the healthiest they could find to put on the plane." The South Vietnamese government and its primary fiscal backer, the United States, allowed conditions to exist to which no child should be subjected--conditions which guarantee a high prevalence of health problems. In a report in the Village Voice, Judith Coburn described an orphanage supervised by South Vietnamese nuns. The 273 children in the orphanage slept in four rooms so crowded that the children near the walls could not get out without crawling over the other children. In such overcrowded facilities many babies lay in their urine and feces for hours while the overworked caretakers rushed from crib to crib attempting to change them. In such quarters a single child's illness could quickly generate an epidemic. The senior nun reported to Ms. Coburn that the biggest problem in the orphanage was the expiration of young babies in their cribs. This nun felt that many of these dying infants had no visible disease and may have died "from simple lack of love or stimulation."

It is in this tragic situation that one gets a glimpse of why so many Americans felt positively towards the airlift. While not all Vietnamese orphanages have conditions like those described above, the fact that some do demands our concern. Certainly no one who cares for children would argue against rescuing them from such inhumane conditions and providing them with at least the minimum of care and attention necessary to sustain life. Indeed it is the horrible circumstances under which many Vietnamese children exist (the word "live" has too positive a connotation to be used here) in Vietnam that imbues America's airlift policy with whatever rationality it possesses.

However, when considered in terms of the total needs of children in Vietnam, the 2,000 children brought to this country barely constitute the tip of the iceberg. One gets some semblance of the magnitude of the problem by examining the figures in a 1973 report by Jean and John Thomas, who served as consultants in studying the Vietnamese child welfare situation for the Agency for International Development (AID). The population of Vietnam was between 17 and 18 million, and of this population about one-half were under age 15. Of this child population 880,000 were orphans (either full or half), although some placed this figure as high as 1.5 million. Some 20,000 children were in registered orphanages. Many of the remaining orphans stayed with their families under a foster parents plan. I would expect that more current figures follow the same trends.

Thus the airlift episode is little more than a tokenistic effort. In regard to this tokenism issue Richard Hughes, founder of the Shoeshine Boys Foundation, a home for street kids in Saigon, stated, "The question is whether the money spent on them would not have been better spent to help ten or twenty times that many children in their own country." A danger of tokenistic efforts surely lies in giving the appearance that a great deal is being done which in turn interferes with moving on to more honest and realistic broad-scale efforts. We cannot construct a sound social policy to meet the needs of the children of Vietnam if we believe that we have fulfilled our responsibilities to those children by transporting 2,000 of them here. I consider the airlift to be little more than a distraction which probably is interfering with the construction of an overall plan directed at helping all the people of Vietnam.

The airlift of Vietnamese children poses another type of problem as serious as that posed by tokenism. While there is a real desire to rescue Vietnamese children residing in inhumane conditions, there is some ambiguity in whether many children brought to America were indeed deprived and whether they were in fact orphans. Evidence has surfaced indicating that some of the children brought here were the progeny of highly placed and/or wealthy South Vietnamese who used bribery to get their children to the safety of America. Several children who arrived told Jane Barton, an official of the American Friends Service Committee who speaks Vietnamese, that they had been living with their parents until a few days before the airlift. Ms. Barton was astonished to discover that many of the children "came from well-educated and wealthy families."

Ms. Barton also reported several cases similar to that of one 8-year-old boy who was separated from his mother in a refugee column, temporarily placed in an orphanage, and a day later flown to the U.S. This lends credence to a Time magazine article which suggested that the speedy removal of children from Vietnam may have resulted in "spiriting away tots whose parents are still alive" (4/14/75). We witnessed on television such inhumane treatment in the tragic scenes of Vietnamese children being pulled from the arms of their Vietnamese foster mothers (the psychological mothers of these children in contradistinction to their biological mothers) and being placed on buses for shipment to the U.S. Furthermore, as Ms. Coburn noted,

> American adoption efforts have never taken fully into account the fact that many of the children in South Vietnamese orphanages are not orphans. Many Vietnamese mothers put their children into orphanages because even the meagre rations available there were better than what they could get at home. (Village Voice, 4/14/75)

The implications of non-orphans being included in the "orphan" airlift are indeed serious to the children involved, to their real and adoptive parents, and to the image of America's intentions. A class action suit has been filed in federal court to stop adoption of the Vietnamese children brought here during the airlift. The New York Times reported that the suit "asks that adoptions be delayed until consent is obtained from the children's parents or relatives, or it is determined that they cannot be found" (5/1/75). These are legal preliminaries to adoption required in Vietnam, but we appear to have sidestepped their adoption legalities too many times in the haste of the airlift. One cannot fathom the misery which will be created if any of the children already "adopted" by American parents prove to be unadoptable and must be returned to their Vietnamese families, not to speak of the misery which their Vietnamese families are experiencing from their absence.

Issues Raised by Operation Babylift

In this section I shall attempt to state and analyze the thorny issues that surfaced once the emotional reaction to the airlift had passed and Americans were able to take a more analytic approach to the problems raised by the babylift.

The Airlift as a Political Ploy

Perhaps the most troublesome charge growing out of the airlift effort was that the Vietnamese children were pawns being used by our nation's leaders in order to achieve certain political and foreign policy ends. Time magazine (4/21/75) stated: "Inevitably, the issue became politicized. To some, the phrase 'Operation Babylift' became associated with a government policy less noble than the words implied. Cynical suspicion mounted that the Administration was seeking to build political capital . . . ." In this

regard Margaret Mead said that the babylift is "a red herring to keep our minds off what's going on there. . . . We've been importing kids for years. The only thing that is unusual here is the extent to which this is being exploited for political reasons" (New York Times, 4/17/75). Similarly, an editorial in the New York Times referred to:

> . . . the exaggerated importance assigned by President Ford to the orphans' airlift. The genuine good will of American families who have embraced these youngsters deserves admiration; but the Government's transparent use of this touching venture has succeeded only in diverting attention from the staggering problems of the millions of displaced of all ages. (4/8/75)

It is my considered opinion that the New York Times editorial writer would not have taken such a negative view of President Ford's actions in regard to the babylift if the writer had taken the trouble of reading carefully news articles which appeared in the Times the day before. President and Mrs. Ford met one of the early incoming planes and the President made two trips onto the plane to carry off the infants. Dr. Stalcup said, "Initially, I was worried that people would try to turn this into a political event, but I was impressed that he [President Ford] and his staff were extremely helpful. Once, he asked me, 'Alex, am I in the way?' There's no question it was moving to him." Dr. George Carnie, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Friends for All Children, talked with Mr. Ford and reported that the President was "very, very concerned about getting more children out of Vietnam," and he promised that AID would "pick up the tab" for the emergency operations then in progress. I fail to find in any of this the Machiavellianism attributed to the President and his aids in regard to the airlift of the Vietnamese children.

Evidence for the honest humanitarian concerns of our government for the plight of Vietnamese children is contained in a letter from Henry Kissinger to cabinet rank officers. In this letter dated April 24, 1974, Kissinger noted the deep personal concern that the President [Nixon] felt for the Vietnamese war orphans. Mr. Kissinger noted that the President expected the agencies to do all that they could to improve the well-being of these children, and suggested that "every effort should be made to streamline immigration and adoption procedures, thereby minimizing the time required to unite many of the eligible children with American families which have expressed a desire to adopt them." We can thus see that the concern of the State Department with the plight of Vietnamese children antedates Operation Babylift by at least a year.

Those who have charged the Ford Administration with politicizing the airlift appear to have taken a much too undifferentiated approach to the cast of actors involved in the babylift scenario. This cast includes the South Vietnamese and the North Vietnamese as well as the Americans. Certainly the North Vietnamese lost little time in making political gain out of the airlift. Premier Pham Van Dong of North Vietnam charged that the airlift was a criminal operation, an American plan to use the South Vietnamese "as instruments in the service of the imperialists and American capitalism."

There does appear to be some evidence that humanitarian and political goals became intertwined so far as South Vietnamese officials were concerned. In a letter circulated throughout Saigon, South Vietnam's Deputy Premier Phan Quang Dan urged the South Vietnamese government to expedite the passage of the orphans. A mass exodus, the letter predicted, would be given wide coverage in the American press, radio and TV networks, and

would create a groundswell of sympathy that would ultimately help the regime (Newsweek, 4/21/75). Dan later denied the charge that he had been playing politics with children's lives and stated, "These children would die if they were not allowed to go." In fairness to these officials, we must remember that they were constructing an emotionally-charged policy while caught up in a panic state in which they believed the fall of Saigon was imminent. Perhaps the issue of Washington's guilt in using the orphaned children centers about the degree of congruence between U.S. policy and South Vietnamese policy at this time. Thieu's acrimonious blast at the U.S. in his resignation as Premier certainly suggests that during this volatile period the policies of Saigon and Washington were not one and the same.

There appear to be two bits of evidence which can be used to support the charge that American officials might have employed the airlift for political and/or foreign policy ends: (1) Judith Coburn stated that "U.S. Ambassador Graham Martin was reported to have made the highly doubtful argument to top Saigon officials that the airlift was helping shift American public opinion in favor of the Thieu government" (Village Voice, 4/14/75). (2) Reports made the rounds in America that in the early days of the airlift the Saigon government ordered a halt to the exodus of the children but rescinded this order following the intervention of American officials. It thus appears that any evidence that the Ford Administration politicized the babylift is circumstantial at best.

The charge that America played politics with Vietnamese children's lives is particularly disturbing since the charge strikes a blow at America's national character. I have been troubled in recent years by the predilection of so many of my fellow Americans to put on a hair shirt and proclaim our

guilt to the world. I find this "mea culpa" attitude to be somewhat ridiculous. While there will probably always be a plethora of ways in which our nation can behave better, I am convinced that if our nation was as bad as some of America's social critics suggest, we could never have lasted 200 years as a nation.

American Guilt

A recurring theme throughout the reports of Operation Babylift was that this was not a humanitarian effort but was essentially meant to assuage the guilt felt by many Americans concerning Vietnam. Dr. Edith Lord, a psychologist at the University of Miami, stated, "There is a heightened hysterical emotional reaction to get orphans in order to alleviate one's sense of guilt" (Denver Post, 4/10/75). This guilt was stimulated by reports over the years that the U.S. participation in Vietnam was "immoral, illegal, and not worthwhile." In support of the guilt hypothesis, Dr. Lord pointed out that during the civil war between Nigeria and Biafra there were pictures of dying and starving children, "But no one rushed in to save them because we had nothing to do with it. There was no guilt to alleviate."

Without question the war in Southeast Asia has presented a deeply disturbing problem to the individual and collective psyches of Americans. When confronted with such problems, individuals often respond with a variety of psychological mechanisms which defend them against the anxiety aroused by threatening situations. It would be foolish to argue that there is not a sizeable group of Americans who feel considerable guilt concerning our nation's role in Vietnam and thus engage in or support those actions which expiate such guilt feelings. However, when one is dealing with the motives and attitudes of millions of Americans, it would be an oversimplification to

impute to all of them a common underlying guilt complex. The motives of individuals who in some way supported Operation Babylift must constitute an extremely variegated collection of psychodynamics including the motive of trying to help children who were perceived as being in dire need of help. Included in this plethora of motives were certainly some that were less than selflessly altruistic.

A mechanism which perhaps played as great a role as guilt in determining the attitudes of many Americans was the mechanism of denial. Representative Don Bonker, after a visit to his constituents, said, "People are drained. They want to bury the memory of Indochina. They regard it as a tragic chapter in American life, but they want no further part of it." The strength of this attitude of denial is evidenced in a Time magazine survey which reported that "A high 68% of those surveyed believe that 'we should put Vietnam behind us and not worry about who was to blame' . . ." (6/16/75).

Some of my own research on defense mechanisms indicates that a sense of guilt represents a more mature reaction to the Vietnamese situation than does the mechanism of massive denial. Furthermore, in terms of what must be done next in meeting our humanitarian obligations to the Vietnamese people, a sense of guilt can certainly lead to more constructive behavior than can the ostrich-like behavior emanating from denial which does little more than blind us to the need to do anything. Yet there is some danger in emphasizing the guilt which so many Americans are currently experiencing in regard to Vietnam, and it is easy to envisage how such an emphasis could prove to be counter-productive. For those Americans who have endorsed and continue to endorse our foreign policy in regard to Vietnam, there is little about which to be guilty. Thus an emphasis on the nation's guilt feelings may do little more

than reopen the nation's wounds and reinstate the hostilities between various segments of our society. If this happens, our energies will be dissipated in internal struggles rather than being constructively directed towards wisely and properly meeting the needs of the Vietnamese people.

American Chauvinism and Racism

A telling criticism of Operation Babylift was that throughout this effort Americans displayed a massive disrespect for the Vietnamese people (both South and North) and their culture. Implicitly and sometimes explicitly the view was expounded that being raised by Americans in the culture of America was superior to being raised by Vietnamese in Vietnam. Critics of Operation Babylift were quick to note our chauvinism and xenophobia. These critics pointed out the ridiculousness of the belief that the Vietnamese Communists would kill children at random and the equally ridiculous suspicion that even the best Vietnamese do not really love or know how to take care of their offspring. Support for the view that the North Vietnamese would care for the orphans comes from an unnamed American official who told Malcolm Browne of the New York Times:

> The Communists have an excellent record in looking after children. Orphans here under the Communists would probably be better off than under the present Saigon government. The real tragedy is the leaving behind of the adults who may face reprisals or death for having worked with Americans. (Quoted in The New Republic, 4/26/75)

A similar opinion was expressed by James Dumpson, who chaired several advisory groups in Southeast Asia. He said, "The evidence is clear, and supported by my several assignments to South Vietnam, . . . that neither the South nor North Vietnamese are less concerned about the well being of children than we are in this country."

Not enough attention has ever been paid to the fact that the Vietnamese have a culture that extends backward in time 2,000 years. Nor have we rppreciated sufficiently the fact that in the Vietnamese culture there is a greater respect for the family unit than there is in America. Even with the ravages of war the extended family, which readily takes in orphaned children, is currently more viable in Vietnam than it is in the United States. To see these children removed from Vietnam, renamed with Americanized first names, and forever denied access to their native heritage and culture was insulting to many Vietnamese, whatever their political affiliations might be.

A subissue in this charge that Americans were guilty of chauvinism and racism was the problem posed by some of the children being of mixed black and Vietnamese parentage. What was never made clear was the relatively small number of potentially adoptable children that had either white or black American fathers. Using the figures provided to AID by Jean and John Thomas, 770 adoptable children had American fathers, with 276 of these children having black American fathers. Whether the partially black children would experience more prejudice in Vietnam than they would in America is an open question. It is interesting that after a decade of involvement in Vietnam, Americans are still not aware that the derisions to which Vietnamese children sired by Americans are subjected have more to do with the size of their noses than with their skin color. Children of mixed matings of South Vietnamese and Americans are called "big nose."

The adoption by white adoptive parents of Afro-Asian children brought to this country in the airlift reopened a festering problem that has long troubled America's child welfare community. An association of black social services agencies has adopted the position that black children should be adopted only by black families. The Child Welfare League of America has

advanced the more defensible position that while every effort should be made to have black parents adopt black children, a black child should not be denied the benefits of a permanent adoptive home due only to the mis-match of his skin color with that of his adoptive parents.

During Operation Babylift stories of Afro-Asian children being adopted by white parents were upsetting to many blacks who felt strongly that only a black family can teach these children how to deal with the complexities involved in black-white relations in the United States, black consciousness and pride, and a feeling of group identity so essential for black children to have. Given America's history of prejudice against blacks, many blacks felt that the Afro-Asian children brought here in the airlift had only been transferred from the frying pan to the fire. William Cribbs, a black legislative aid in Washington, said, "A boy may be a babe in arms now but eventually he is going to be a 17-year-old buck. Is he going to be able to walk down the street with the mayor's daughter? The barriers are there--and if white America doesn't think they are, they are mistaken" (Newsweek, 4/21/75).

Again, the strongest rebuttal to these criticisms concerning culture and race came from adoptive parents. Mr. Stevens, an adoptive father, stated:

> All this worry about acculturation is nonsense. Maybe it's a problem when they're 16, but not for babies. The alternative is leaving them in an orphanage that our country has been supporting and then having that support withdrawn. . . . If [my child] had been left in Vietnam she would not have survived. (New York Times, 4/9/75)

Certainly if the choice is between living and encountering intolerance or being dead, one would have to select living. The question, of course, is whether these are the only two alternatives open to Vietnamese children.

For Children or Parents

A further question which arose during Operation Babylift centered about whether the purpose of the airlift was to help Vietnamese children or whether it was designed to provide children for Americans wishing to adopt. In the early days of the airlift many of us were troubled by the repeated stories in newspapers and on TV of Americans phoning the private agencies handling the adoptions of the Vietnamese children and requesting a child. This smacked too much of calling the corner pizzeria for a take-out order. And while several Americans were vocal in questioning the motives of those adopting the children, the response from many Vietnamese was much more embittered. On the day of the C-5A crash a South Vietnamese army lieutenant said, "It is nice to see you Americans taking home souvenirs of our country as you leave--china elephants and orphans. Too bad some of them broke today, but we have plenty more" (The New Republic, 4/26/75).

In the many stories written about the airlift, insufficient emphasis was given to the fact that the children brought here were of two types: (1) Vietnamese children who were already in the adoptive pipeline and whose adoptive parents had already gone through careful screening. For these children the airlift provided quicker entry into the U.S. (2) Children who were not already in the adoptive pipeline but who were hurriedly brought to this country with their adoptions being arranged following their entry. The controversy concerning the motives of the adoptive parents is relevant only to the second group of children. When these children arrived too many Americans

displayed an abysmal ignorance of the intricacies of the legal adoption process and the reasons why this process contains so many safeguards.

The rhetoric surrounding the controversy soon became acrimonious and the adoptive parents were hurt and shaken by having their altruistic motives called into question. In retrospect it is now clear that the true villain here was neither the adoptive parents nor their critics, but was rather the poor planning (or lack of planning) behind Operation Babylift. Many of the adoptive parents were placed in a vulnerable position by the readiness of those in charge of the airlift to ignore the rather stringent requirements that must be met by adoptive parents, requirements that have been developed over the years and which are directed primarily towards guaranteeing optimal homes for adopted children. During this frenzied period at least some Americans who might not qualify as adoptive parents under normal circumstances were permitted to adopt Vietnamese children. For instance, in one newspaper report we read of a single-parent home being approved for the adoption of an Operation Babylift child. While adoptions by single parents are not always ill-advised, the babylift children are likely to have needs and problems which could be better met by two parent figures. According to Joseph Reid, the adoption rush also resulted in some parents receiving children other than those for whom they were prepared, e.g., very handicapped or racially mixed children of other than white-Vietnamese parentage. One must raise the question of whether hurriedly placing these vulnerable children in perhaps less than optimal adoptive homes was really in their best interest

Needs of American Children

Another issue which surfaced in the national dialogue concerning Operation Babylift was the fact that there were many children in America who

needed the concern and services being given to the Vietnamese children. This is hardly the place to present the long, sad litany of our national failure in meeting the needs of our children. If one really needs documentation for these charges I suggest that he browse through the report of the 1970 White House Conference on Children. This document is essentially a 400-page statement of all that we are not doing and should be doing for children.

For those who have labored long and hard in the hope of motivating our society to help our needy young citizens, witnessing the nation's vast concern with a few hundred Vietnamese orphans gave rise to the charge of hypocrisy. Where is the concern for the thousands of American children who do not survive infancy because America, the richest nation on earth, has yet to lift itself into the company of the top 10 nations having the lowest infant mortality rates? Where is the concern over the National Nutrition Survey which reported on the vast number of poor children who do not receive sufficient nutrition to achieve normal physical development? Where is the concern for the 10's of thousands of children of working mothers who go uncared for during that period of the day between the time school is dismissed and their parents return from work? Where is the concern for those 350,000 children in America's inadequate foster care program whose entire childhoods are often spent moving from home to home? Where is the concern for those 400,000 children cared for in residential institutions, sometimes in conditions which Professor Burton Blatt of Syracuse University has described as permitting the legalized abuse of children? James Dumpson, an expert on the social services needs of children in both America and Vietnam, stated: "There is nothing but danger and folly in seeking out and deracinating far-eastern children while at the same time we callously ignore the equally desperate needs of our own children, and dehumanize our own children . . . ."

If nothing else, the airlift of Vietnamese children forced Americans to read in their daily papers of the plight of approximately 100,000 American children available for adoption but who would go unadopted without special efforts by adoption agencies to recruit additional families. Why at a time when the number of families wishing to adopt children far outnumbers the cohort of children available for adoption, do we have so many children who cannot be placed into adoptive homes? In professional circles the euphemism for these children is "hard-to-place" children. Beneath this benign nomenclature is the fact that these children are not adopted because they are too old (adoptive parents strongly prefer infants and may consider even 3-year-olds as too old), they are handicapped, and/or the children are black. The cost to taxpayers of moving these children from foster placement to foster placement from early childhood to young adulthood is in the neighborhood of $60,000 per child. Perhaps this makes us feel that we are doing "enough" for these children, so the practice of subsidized adoptions which would cost but a fraction of this figure and could guarantee permanent homes with loving parents has yet to become a routine feature of our child welfare policy.

As a long-time advocate for children, I can state without fear of contradiction that the single greatest barrier to mounting needed programs for children in this country is the myth that we are a child-oriented society that has done for America's children all that needs doing. As a result of this myth, the bulk of our populace not only is unaware of our nation's serious shortcomings in dealing with certain basic needs of children and their families, but appears unable to hear or comprehend the indictment that can honestly be made concerning our unfulfilled responsibilities to America's children. When the history of Operation Babylift is finally written, it may

well be that its greatest value lay in forcing Americans to become aware of what we as a nation were not doing for our own deprived and vulnerable children.

A Proposal for U.S. Aid to the Babylift Children and to the Vietnamese Remaining in Vietnam

The foregoing look at Operation Babylift and the issues raised by this effort should make clear that the humanitarian needs of the Vietnamese people cannot be met by bringing a relatively small number of Vietnamese children to America for adoption. What is needed at this critical juncture of America's involvement in Vietnam is a comprehensive plan for human and physical reconstruction similar to the Marshall Plan following World War II. With considerable temerity I would like to conclude this paper by presenting the rough outline of such a plan. Given the fluidity of the present situation it would be inappropriate for me to attempt a comprehensive well-articulated final plan. What is needed at this point is a plan that would set into motion a process that would eventuate in such a final program. While I can do little more here than present a general outline of a first phase in our nation's relief effort in Vietnam, I learned from my own government service that one needs to be as specific as possible if his proposal is to serve as a guide to action. This is by way of saying that the plan I have to offer is too general in certain respects while being too specific in others. Furthermore, given my area of knowledgeability and my history of child advocacy, my plan is mainly directed at improving the lot of Vietnamese children. It should however be apparent to us all that the social services and humanitarian needs of the Vietnamese people go far beyond the more circumscribed needs of the children. Our nation must commit itself to delivering assistance to the Vietnamese people, whatever age the recipients might be.

One final note is in order. In developing my recommendations for Vietnamese children, I relied heavily on the principles enunciated in the book, Beyond the Best Interests of the Child, by Joseph Goldstein, Anna Freud, and Albert Solnit (1973). I am indebted to these authors for what I think to be the most thoughtful book ever written in which sound principles of child development are utilized to direct difficult social policy decisions.

For purposes of clarity, I will number the specific recommendations for the course of action that I would suggest.

1. I think that humanitarian aid for the people of Vietnam should be elevated in the national consciousness and disentangled from all other aspects of our Vietnamese policy. I continue to be concerned that so much attention and controversy have been directed at the problem of evacuating and resettling approximately 100,000 South Vietnamese that little attention is being paid to the millions of Vietnamese who remain in their land. It therefore becomes very important that we place the refugee problem in its proper perspective. I personally think that the evacuation had to be done. I believe that we have a moral commitment to those South Vietnamese who cast their lives with us and who acted as our agents in recent years. My major concern over the evacuation and resettlement plan is that it might lead to a weary people feeling that with the resettlement we will have finally balanced the ledgers in regard to our obligations to the Vietnamese. We must not be dissuaded from the view that our obligations to the Vietnamese will not be met by bringing 2,000 children here for adoption or even by bringing to America 100,000 South Vietnamese who felt themselves endangered.

Once we have recognized that the massive relief needs of the Vietnamese people have three aspects—the babylift children, the refugees, and the

Vietnamese remaining in Vietnam--the entire federal bureaucracy must be mobilized to meet these needs. The first step in such a mobilization would be the designation of an individual who, with President Ford's support, would be in charge. The task of resettling the South Vietnamese who wished to leave their country is a massive undertaking in its own right and a job plenty large enough for one person to coordinate. Former President Eisenhower's son, John Eisenhower, has been named chairman of a citizen's committee established to oversee the resettlement task. However, no one has as yet been appointed to head our efforts to assist either the babylift children or the children and adults in Vietnam. We must immediately recruit an individual capable of setting into motion a plan to deliver comprehensive social services to these groups of Vietnamese. Such an individual should not only be conversant with child welfare and the nature of social services, but must also have the confidence of the President and the knowledge of how the federal establishment can be coached along in the achievement of a circumscribed goal.

The first person who entered my mind to become coordinator of relief services to the Vietnamese people was Daniel P. Moynihan. This remarkable scholar-statesman would be perfectly qualified to head the massive operation that is required. However, I am not the only person who thinks so highly of Dr. Moynihan. President Ford soon nominated him to become our nation's Ambassador to the United Nations, and the Senate has confirmed this nomination. In an exchange of correspondence between Dr. Moynihan and myself (5/15/75), our new U.N. Ambassador expressed essential agreement with my position and suggested that he might be of help from his post at the U.N. It is my view that Dr. Moynihan has exactly the type of head and heart that will lead him to provide this help. In the meantime, however, it is imperative that an

outstanding American be named to coordinate our nation's humanitarian aid to the airlift children and their adoptive families and to the needy children and adults who have remained in Vietnam.

I have another specific recommendation to make in regard to the overall humanitarian effort for the Vietnamese. I have been most impressed with our new first lady, Betty Ford. It is clear that Mrs. Ford is in the tradition of other of our courageous and activist first ladies. I would recommend that Mrs. Ford act as honorary chairperson to our nation's relief effort in Vietnam. Having such a visible and committed honorary chairperson would not only be valuable for a variety of pragmatic reasons but would be a clear signal to the world of the seriousness of our nation's commitment to such a humanitarian effort.

Early in the planning of our relief effort I would suggest that all those involved not reinvent the wheel but rather carefully mine the reports of the several conferences dealing with relief services for Vietnam as well as the testimony delivered at several congressional hearings on the plight of the Vietnamese people. I also recommend a close scrutiny of the remarks made to the Senate by Edward Kennedy concerning the plight of the children of Indochina (Congressional Record, 5/14/73). On the House side of congressional activities, I have been impressed by the bipartisan thrust for humanitarian aid to the Vietnamese provided by Republican Congressman William A. Steiger and Democratic Congresswoman Patsy Mink. Congressman Steiger has visited South Vietnam and demonstrates a solid grasp of the problems confronting those wanting to provide social services to the Vietnamese.

2. Whoever leads our humanitarian effort in Vietnam, a lead federal agency must be named. This role is currently being played by AID, but I have come to

the sad conclusion that AID must be replaced as the lead agency. AID has lost the confidence of congressional leaders and of many individuals knowledgeable about the social services needs of the Vietnamese. Certainly in regard to meeting children's needs, AID did not appear properly equipped, either conceptually or philosophically. Furthermore, AID has had several years to muster a comprehensive social services program for South Vietnam but has failed.

Of course kinder evaluations of AID than found here can be discerned. In testimony before the Senate Judiciary subcommittee on refugees on May 11, 1973, Dr. James Dumpson and Mr. Wells Klein, experts on child welfare and the situation in Vietnam stated, "After many years of inaction, AID had initiated a well-thought out program of child welfare assistance in Vietnam. The AID continuing effort should be encouraged and supported by this Subcommittee and by the Administration." Yet viewed from the safety and insularity of my academic ivory tower, the AID efforts over the years appear to be awash with a sea of good intentions that unfortunately generated questionable acts.

In connection with AID several conferences have been held, the most recent being early this year when a number of professional social services people met in Saigon. Perhaps the first of these conferences was one in Washington several years ago. There a consensus was reached that the solution to the problem of providing social services to the Vietnamese should not lean heavily on the practice of bringing Vietnamese children to America for adoption. In reading through the proceedings of subsequent conferences, I can find no evidence that child welfare specialists ever moved away from their essentially negative stance towards bringing children to this country for adoption except as an absolutely last resort. Nevertheless, when the

chips were down, AID's response was Operation Babylift. I can only conclude that AID was surprisingly impervious to the counsel and advice this agency received from many knowledgeable people.

At the height of Operation Babylift, a hearing was held by the House Judiciary Committee's subcommittee on immigration, citizenship, and international law. The subcommittee chairman, Rep. Joshua Eilberg, opened the hearing by stating that there was "a total lack of direction, leadership and coordination by the various agencies involved in the orphan airlift." Further suggestion that too many cooks spoil the broth is contained in a report of a news conference of James Greene, Deputy Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. In speaking of the possibility of resuming Operation Babylift, Mr. Greene was asked what difference it would make if a few hundred more Vietnamese children were allowed into the United States for humanitarian reasons. Mr. Greene replied: "There is a way to do it and we ought to do it that way" (New York Times, 4/18/75). This left the impression that the way we had been doing it was the wrong way. In a personal communication, Mr. Greene informed me that throughout the airlift officials of the Immigration and Naturalization Service limited their role to facilitating the legal entry of the airlifted children into the U.S. He further stated that what he was taking exception to in his press remark was certain actions of private individuals that were both irresponsible and illegal (e.g., Mr. Daly's violation of immigration laws). Certainly with so many individuals and agencies involved, it is understandable why so many Americans would have liked to shout out in frustration: "Who's in charge here anyway?" I am very much afraid that throughout Operation Babylift everybody was in charge and therefore no one was.

It should be noted that from 1973 on, HEW employed its expertise in doing what it could to support AID in providing child welfare services to the Vietnamese. During this period AID officials showed considerable insight into their limitations as a social services agency. In a report on HEW's response to the problems of the Vietnamese orphans, one of the officials of AID was reported as saying, "AID is more capable of dealing with economic problems than with human problems and they look to HEW to help in that area."

I would recommend that the U.S. Children's Bureau be the lead agency for any program of humanitarian aid to the children of Vietnam. My selection of the Children's Bureau stems not from my past association with this agency but from the fact that it is committed to doing what is in the best interests of children. This agency not only contains a dedicated group of professionals knowledgeable about child welfare, adoption, and foster care, but it is also an agency that has no axe to grind other than that our nation do as much as it can to improve the quality of the lives of children everywhere. This principle has directed the Bureau's activities for over 60 years.

I find myself in essential agreement with the views of one of the world's truly outstanding child psychologists, Professor Robert Sears of Stanford University. In a letter to President Ford about Operation Babylift, a letter endorsed by the Governing Council of the Society for Research in Child Development, Professor Sears stated:

> There are many skilled child development specialists in both governmental and private agencies who could assist in planning. The Government has excellent resources in the Children's Bureau, the National Institutes of Health, the National Institute of Mental Health, and the Office of Child Development. We urge most strongly that the assistance of such people be enlisted before the evacuation

operation goes further. The medical and mental health needs of the children require it. (4/11/75)

Another factor which led to my recommendation that the Children's Bureau be the lead agency is the fact that the Bureau is ultimately directed by the Assistant Secretary for Human Development of HEW, Mr. Stanley Thomas, Jr. It is clear from a letter by Mr. Thomas to Congressman William Steiger (appearing in the Congressional Record, 7/18/74) that Mr. Thomas had the responsibility in HEW for acting upon the Kissinger letter referred to earlier. I would very much like to see Mr. Thomas continue to play a central role in a humanitarian relief effort for Vietnam since this vigorous young man is clearly one of our nation's most effective public servants.

3. Any plan to aid Vietnamese children must be two-pronged. One thrust should be directed at assisting the 2,000 children brought here during Operation Babylift and aiding the adoptive parents of these children. The second and larger thrust should be directed at helping the hundreds of thousands of children in Vietnam who need help.

Concerning the 2,000 children brought here during the airlift, we must remember that these children are here due to an official policy of our nation. Our commitment to these children does not end by doing nothing more than uniting them with their adoptive parents. I am afraid we are asking these adoptive parents to assume a burden that should be shouldered by the entire nation. We must never forget that these children have lived their entire lives in a war-ravaged nation and experienced events to which no child should ever be subjected. My own research with American children indicates that the effects of deprivation early in a child's life can be seen years later. The effects of deprivation appear to be laid down in the

child's psychological structure, which then mediates further exchanges between the child and his environment. (Reports of the babylift children's insatiable need for attention and affection from adults are a case in point.) Thus the physical and psychological deprivation experienced by many of these children in their formative years means that they must be considered vulnerable and/or high risk children who need special attention if they are to thrive.

The psychological difficulties of the babylift children may be exacerbated further by "culture shock" due to the demands of adjusting to a strange and alien culture. For optimal development, children need continuity and a sense of living in a predictable and safe environment. Advice on what adoptive parents might do to help their children through culture shock is contained in a fine pamphlet entitled "Adjustment Shock," prepared by the Holt Adoption Program (1974). All adoptive parents of Vietnamese children, as well as professionals who will be working with these children, should receive this pamphlet. I find myself in complete agreement with Ursula Gallagher, a child welfare specialist in the Children's Bureau. Ms. Gallagher stated:

> Many people haven't thought through what it will mean to them if they adopt one of these children. They must be aware of the different needs the child will have in respect to his identity, his biological parents and his homeland. Many people who are reaching out haven't thought about the psychological and financial problems. They're reaching out to children who need . . . .
> (New Haven Register, 4/10/75)

Where then can these adoptive parents seek and receive help over the developing years of their adoptive children? Due to changes in the social fabric of America, help for any parent in raising children is no longer readily available. I agree with Professor Urie Bronfenbrenner of Cornell

who has made a telling case (1975) for the proposition that in America there has been a decline in our sense of community support for the raising of children. We should be aware that because of Operation Babylift these 2,000 children are special children and that the community which must support the adoptive parents in raising them is the nation as a whole. I am asking that all American adults consider themselves surrogate parents to these children who are here as the result of a specific commitment of our nation's leaders. How then can we best help the adoptive parents in their difficult task of raising these children? Before I suggest specific actions that we should take, allow me to suggest what we should not do.

I must confess that to date I have been more than a little disappointed in the reaction to Operation Babylift of certain segments of America's research community. At the height of the airlift I was asked if I would attend a conference at which research plans would be generated for studying the babylift children. Although I have spent my entire professional life committed to the value of empirical research, this invitation troubled me greatly. While the nation was in throes of paroxysms of concern over the orphans, the response of some child psychologists was to have one more conference and do some more research. My reply to this invitation was that the last thing that these children needed was to be employed as subjects in yet another series of research studies.

This mating dance of one more conference and some more research not only impressed me as being misdirected and insensitive but also struck me as smacking too much of the "business-as-usual" syndrome. Operation Babylift qualifies in no way as routine or usual. This is not the time to do more studies but rather it is the time for all professionals to roll up their sleeves and utilize the research on deprived children that has been collected over the

past 30 years to help the babylift children. The disappointing response of some (certainly not all) of my fellow child psychologists did help explain to me why the behavioral research community has fallen so in the esteem of Congress and the citizenry at large.

What then should be done to help the babylift children and their adoptive parents? What is needed are some administrative mechanisms and some leadership. Mechanisms should be set in place and funded that would permit dealing with the physical health and mental health problems of the babylift children. In regard to physical health, surveys conducted in 1972 and 1974 (cited in the American Academy of Pediatrics task force report referred to earlier) have shown that among Asian children adopted here, as many as 83% developed acute illnesses during their first 6 months in the U.S. I would recommend that the federal government supply funds to the American Academy of Pediatrics and charge them with providing medical services to the babylift children now and until these children reach maturity. This Academy assumed something of this same role in providing medical services to poor children in the early days of the Head Start program. In regard to the mental health needs of the children and their families, I would see a similar arrangement worked out with the American Academy of Child Psychiatry and/or the American Association of Psychiatric Services for Children. We must also make immediate efforts to develop an educational program to help adoptive parents understand and help their children. I believe that some adoption agencies already have such counseling programs, and these should be supported and expanded so that they can be available to all who need them.

Again the success of an effort to aid the adoptive children and parents depends upon the quality of its leadership. We must protect these 2,000

children from the notoriously limited attention span of the American people. What worries me is that concern for these children will be dissipated over time as the nation confronts a variety of other and more pressing problems. It is therefore imperative that this effort for the babylift children be headed by someone with an impeccable record of child advocacy who will remain a visible symbol of the nation's conscience and continuing commitment to these children. I would recommend Dr. Julius Richmond, our nation's first director of the Head Start program. Dr. Richmond has the respect and confidence of America's child development community. Mobilization of this community is absolutely necessary if we are to carry out the actions listed above.

The plan being suggested here has certain similarities to the plan for helping our prisoners of war to readjust following their release from North Vietnam. How effective the prisoner-of-war plan proved to be is open to argument. What is beyond dispute is the fact that the very existence of such a plan indicated a concern and commitment to our returned prisoners. I am asking that we express the same type of concern and commitment for the children brought here in Operation Babylift.

Given the sketchy plan outlined above I would like to make clear that the effort I have in mind should not be limited to the actions of the federal government alone. These 2,000 children now live in many communities and localities. What must be done is to program local physical and mental health resources so that they can be optimally used by the babylift children and their families. The development of such advocacy and services brokerage functions at all levels of government is consonant with the recommendations of the report of the Joint Commission on Mental Health of Children (1970), a document which has yet to receive the attention it deserves. The problem is

that our nation has yet to develop sound methods of child advocacy and optimal models for providing services to children and their families.

Let us not blind ourselves to the fact that the physical and mental health services that I am proposing for the Vietnamese children are also needed by many American children. Perhaps by developing models of advocacy and services delivery for the Vietnamese children we will learn how such efforts should and could be done. Such models would be readily transferable and instruct us on how we might better deliver a variety of services to all of America's children. I am suggesting here that by committing ourselves to helping others we may eventually be helping ourselves.

4. A problem much larger and much more complicated centers about the provision of humanitarian aid to the hundreds of thousands of children remaining in Vietnam. Beyond the children is an even larger problem involving the dispossessed refugees of all ages. With the fall of the Saigon government, any relief plan for Vietnam runs into an initial barrier concerning exactly to whom do we give money and/or relief supplies. An easy but probably inappropriate answer is to the legal government presently ruling the Vietnamese people. It should be remembered that aid was promised to the North Vietnamese at the time of the Paris accord. However, both Congress and the man on the street balked at providing such aid. I do not see any indication that we are more ready to do so now. It is an interesting psychological phenomenon that America can readily provide aid to those whom we defeat in battle but not to those we have failed to vanquish. A standing joke in the international community is that any nation can solve its financial difficulties if it (a) declares war on the U.S., (b) promptly loses the war, and (c) implores the U.S. for foreign aid. The critical aspect in this sequence would appear to be "b."

In addition to a variety of psychological reasons that deter us from providing help to an unvanquished foe, there is one concrete and highly visible factor that makes aiding the government of North Vietnam extremely difficult if not impossible. We cannot lose sight of 50,000 American families who lost loved ones in Vietnam or 150,000 other households where a family member was seriously wounded in the war. Add further to this sizeable number our prisoners of war who were mistreated by the North Vietnamese and still more families suffering the unbearable ambiguity of having loved ones labeled only M.I.A. I believe that aid given directly to the North Vietnamese government would be considered an insult by these Americans and an even larger group of Americans who sympathize with them.

I therefore do not think that dealing with the government in Hanoi is a viable solution to discovering a conduit for humanitarian aid sent by the American people to the Vietnamese. At the same time, however, I can think of no better indicator of America's greatness as a nation than its willingness to provide relief to needy individuals living under Communist rule. Since I think policy construction to be the art of the possible, I have concluded that we must look elsewhere for a mechanism that could be employed to get aid and services into Vietnam.

One obvious conduit is United Nations agencies such as UNICEF, which has already been permitted to open a coordinating office in Hanoi. For the past 2 years UNICEF has been allowed to provide food, medicine, and shelter materials on both sides of embattled Cambodia, to both administrations in Laos, and to both North and South Vietnam. A second possible conduit for humanitarian aid for the Vietnamese is a consortium of private philanthropic relief agencies. One thinks here of the American Council of Voluntary Agencies

for Foreign Service, an umbrella organization of 42 religious and civic groups working in Indochina. Some of these organizations managed to work on both sides of the fighting lines in Vietnam. Senators Kennedy and Humphrey have already taken the initiative in proposing funding for such international and private relief agencies. (In a personal communication to me, Senator Kennedy stated that my humanitarian aid plan would be utilized by the Senate subcommittee on refugees.) The need is great and the task is clear. I can only agree with the New York Times editorial which stated that "Any agency that is demonstrably equipped to help alleviate the suffering of Indochina's people deserves urgent support--with no political strings attached."

Where then does the adoption of Vietnamese children by Americans fit into this overall humanitarian and relief effort? I agree with Goldstein et al. that any policy for children be built on the bedrock principle that children need a sense of continuity and belonging. I therefore think that we should do everything we can to keep children in their own homes with their own families or as close to their homes as possible. This does not mean that under absolutely all circumstances I would oppose the adoption of some Vietnamese children by Americans. I am in complete agreement with the conclusions of several conferences as well as the views of those knowledgeable about conditions in Vietnam that the adoption of Vietnamese children be considered only as a last resort to be engaged in only when no other alternative is possible

On the day that Saigon fell both President Ford and Dr. Kissinger voiced their desires that Americans end their recriminations concerning U.S. policy in Vietnam, and called for a healing of wounds in America caused by the internal conflict concerning our role in the Vietnam episode. I believe that

such a coming together can be facilitated if all Americans now unite behind the humanitarian cause of providing relief for the Vietnamese people. It may thus be that in helping the weak, the sick, and the homeless we may ultimately be helping ourselves to once again become a united people.

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